

Holger Rajavee

MYTH. GENIUS. ART:
THE AUTUMN SCHOOL
OF DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

The Autumn School organised by the Department of Art History of the University of Tartu called “Myth. Genius. Art” was held on October 15th and 16th of this year. And as has been the tradition, the fourth Autumn School was conducted in cooperation with the University of Tartu Art Museum. In some respects, this time the event consciously continued the provocative approach of last year’s Autumn School (the title in 2014 was “Art and Beauty”) – with the goal of “revitalizing” concepts and phenomena that have been relegated to the background in art theory during recent decades. Based on the presentations that were heard during the two days, one can say that the choice of topics within the framework of the designated title ended up covering an extremely wide spectrum, which was the other goal of the Autumn School, i.e. to broaden the circle of topics to include as many facets as possible by including presentations by specialists from different fields.

Philosopher and man of letters Ülo Matjus, who is the Professor of Estonian Philosophy at the University of Tartu, started the first day off with his presentation, “Art in the Era of Realizing Modern History”. Well-known for having “Estonianized” the works of Martin Heidegger, Matjus dealt with the change in the meaning of art in the present day through the author. Based on Heidegger’s statement that art is a machin-

ation (*Machenschaft*), Matjus discussed the changes in how art is viewed in the present day, the manifestation of nature's beauty through structures of artificial nature produced by humans and works of art as the carriers of the truth of being.

The topic of the second presentation by artist and philosopher Anne Kokkov was "The Intentionality of Colours in Konrad Mägi's Paintings"¹ based on a discussion of Roman Ingarden's ontological theory of the intentionality of colours, the role of a painting's colours as purely a structural (not a separate) phenomenon in an intentional work of art, i.e. without it being a part of the art work itself, and also without differentiating colour as a "pigment" or "hue". Kokkov viewed the validity of this theory and the contradictions based on the works of Konrad Mägi.

The next presentation was "Touching Art Untouchably" by Anzori Barkalaja, a folklorist with a PhD in folk poetry research. What is the relationship between myth and art? How have these perceivable or unperceivable contacts progressed and changed throughout history? And what role do the religious and behavioural facets play? These are some of the questions that resounded from Barkalaja's presentation.

Mirjam Lepikult, a freelance translator with an MA in the science of philosophy who, in recent years, has focused on translating and analyzing the works of Michel Foucault, titled her presentation "Michel Foucault's Philosophical Vision Based on Art". Based on the French philosopher's works, Lepikult dealt with the development of works of art, dividing them conditionally into the vertical (having "grown out of" the ground or matter), the horizontal (discursive) and the spherical, as a further development of Foucault's concept of power.

The first day of the Autumn School ended with a presentation by Janika Päll, PhD in classical philology at the University of Tartu. Called "Genius and Sublimity: Theories of Art and Literature in Antique era. On Inspiration and Talent in Renaissance and Early Modern eras", the presentation was based primarily on the approach to sublimity in Longinus's *On the Sublime* (*Peri hýpsous*). Päll schematically analysed the teachings of Longinus and their influences on subsequent European cultural history.

The first speaker on the second day was Reet Mark, an art historian and research fellow at the Estonian National Museum, who spoke

¹ The presentation was based on previously published article: *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 8 (2014), 157–188.

on the topic “On Endel Kõks. On a Genius?”. Speaking about the work of one of our most original artists, Mark provided a thorough survey of his creative path, his experimental multi-directional searches, those who served as examples for him and his years of travel, which as a whole moulded Kõks into an artist with one of the most kaleidoscopic and colourful art legacies in Estonian art history.

The presentation called “Two Kinds of Talent According to the Imprinted Brain Theory” by Amar Annus PhD was based on the diametric contrasting of mechanical and mentalistic intelligence and the analysis of the differences in these two forms. Through this contrast, Annus provided a possible new solution for dealing with genius as a phenomenon.

The last speaker at this year’s Autumn School was Eduard Parhomenko, a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Tartu, whose topic was “The Constraint of Genius by Kant/Oppression of Dionysus by Nietzsche”. Parhomenko focused on an interpretation of the statement formulated as the title § 45 of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*: “Beautiful Art is an art, in so far as it seems like nature.” The speaker examined taste as treated by Kant as a mode outside of the constraint of genius, which promotes cultures, and, as a counterbalance, introduces Friedrich Nietzsche’s Dionysian principle of the power of art, which with its rationality has brought culture into a state of crisis.

Looking back on this year’s Autumn School, one can definitely say that this yearly event has filled a separate niche in the calendar of events related to our art and cultural history. This is proven by the interest shown by both the audiences and presenters. It should also be mentioned that most of the presentations will be published in a special issue of the *Baltic Journal of Art History* in 2016, which will be devoted to the Autumn School.

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CV:

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